CHOLA TEMPLES

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

THE CHOLA TEMPLES

THAÑJĀVŪR
GAṄGAIKOṆḌACHOḶAPURAM & DĀRĀSURAM

BY

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THIRD EDITION

प्रत्नकीर्तिमपावृणु

PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
1978

First Edition 1960
Second Edition 1973
Third Edition 1978

©

1978
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

Price : *Rs.* 2·00

PRINTED BY SHRI S. N. GUHA RAY AT SREE SARASWATY PRESS LTD.,
CALCUTTA-9

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THE CHOḶA TEMPLES

THAÑJĀVŪR, GAṄGAIKOṆḌACHOḶAPURAM & DĀRĀSURAM

GENERAL INFORMATION

THAÑJĀVŪR, the headquarters of the District of that name, lies about 322 km to the south-west of Madras and is reached from Madras by rail or road. The main temple of the place, the Bṛihadīśvara, is about 1·5 km away from the railway-station. The retiring-rooms of the station, the Inspection Bungalow belonging to the Public Works Department and the Raja's *chaultry* are the places where the visitor may stay.

Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram, in Uḍyārpāḷayam Taluk of Tiruchchirāppaḷḷi District, is situated to the east of Tiruchchirāppaḷḷi and is conveniently approached from that place (99 km) or from Kumbakoṇam (36 km), *via* Jayamkoṇḍachoḷapuram, by good roads served by a regular bus-service. There is no proper rest-house at the place, which is now a straggling village, unimportant except for its famous Bṛihadīśvara temple.

Dārāsuram is situated 5 km to the south of Kumbakoṇam, where there is a Travellers' Bungalow. It has a railway-station on the Madras-Rāmeśvaram line of Southern Railway and is also served by good roads from Thañjāvūr and Tiruchchirāpaḷḷi.

The monuments remain open to visitors daily from sunrise to sunset. Subject to the observance of religious conventions, visitors are allowed to take photographs of the monuments, but the use of a camera-stand or artificial light other than synchronized flash-light is prohibited. While there is no bar against the preparation of eight-millimetre cinematographic films, licence is required for the preparation of larger films which require the use of a camera-stand or involve other special previous arrangements.

Photographs of the monuments are available on payment from the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi-110011, and the Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Circle, Fort St. George, Madras-600009.

HISTORY

The Choḷas of Thañjāvūr (ninth to twelfth centuries) were great conquerors, who were not only paramount in south India but for some time extended their sway as far as the river Gaṅgā in the north and brought Sri Lanka, a part of Burma, the Malayan peninsula and some islands of south-east Asia under their influence. They were also mighty builders, who erected a large number of temples in their empire, some of them constituting the finest specimens of south Indian architecture. Inheritors of the Pallava tradition, the edifices also reflect the power and genius of their authors.

Karikāla, the early Choḷa emperor of the Śaṅgam age, is lost in legendary grandeur. It was several centuries later that Vijayālaya, in *circa* 850, established a small kingdom around Thañjāvūr, which developed into a gigantic empire under his successors. In the time of Āditya and Parāntaka, the son and grandson respectively of Vijayālaya, there was a great temple-building activity. Parāntaka ruled for forty-eight years. Bearing such heroic titles as *vīraśoḷan* and *samara-kesarī*, he extended his dominions by conquests. As the conqueror of the Pāṇḍyas, who ruled further south at Madurai, and of Sri Lanka he was styled *Maduraiyum Īḷamum-koṇḍa*, i.e., one who captured Madurai and Sri Lanka. He was a great devotee of Śiva in the Chidambaram temple, which he covered with gold. That he was also a great scholar and patron of literature is suggested by his title *paṇḍita-vatsala*. He had sons who inherited his qualities but were

unfortunately short-lived. His eldest son, Rājāditya, while almost defeating the Rāshṭrakūṭa king, Kṛishṇa III, died on the battle-field on his elephant at the moment of victory. His younger brother was Gaṇḍarāditya, whose queen, widowed early with a little child in her arms, was a pious lady, remarkable for her generous practice of building and endowing temples.

This was a weak period in Choḷa history, when Kṛishṇa III asserted his power in Toṇḍai-maṇḍalam, and, the son of Gaṇḍarāditya being just a babe, Ariñjaya, the younger brother of Gaṇḍarāditya, ascended the throne. But he soon lost his life on the battle-field in trying to regain the lost territory from the Rāshṭrakūṭas. His son, Sundara-Choḷa, who succeeded him, was a great warrior and a just ruler. Like his grandfather Parāntaka, he was a great patron of literature. His last days were clouded by the sad assassination of his war-like eldest son Āditya. His second son, Rājarāja, was then a youth, accomplished and powerful; but the nobility of Rājarāja was such that even though desired by his subjects, he refused to ascend the throne, as his uncle Uttama-Choḷa, the son of Gaṇḍarāditya, now quite grown up, longed for it. Rājarāja eventually succeeded Uttama-Choḷa.

Rājarāja I, known as Rājakesarī Arumoḷivarman, ascended the throne in 985 and was probably the greatest of the Choḷa emperors. His military triumph, organization of the empire, patronage of art and literature and religious tolerance are partially eclipsed by the achievements of his son Rājendra, who was a great military genius. As the Choḷa kingdom had just recovered

from the onslaught of the Rāshṭrakūṭas, Rājarāja started his region with military campaigns to strengthen his position. He brought low the Keralas, Pāṇḍyas and Siṁhalas, overcame the western hilly tracts, Mysore and Gaṅgavāḍi. He also overcame the Chāḷukya king Satyā-śraya, the large treasures captured from whom were utilized in the enrichment of the temple at Thañjāvūr. As a sagacious conqueror, Rājarāja gave his daughter Kundavai in marriage to Vimalāditya, whose elder brother Śaktivarman, the Eastern Chāḷukya king, was under his protection. He sent his son Rājendra to Kaliṅga and established a pillar of victory on the Mahendra hill. With his mighty navy, Rājarāja conquered the Maldives, besides a number of other islands, and crippled the power of the Cheras known for their naval strength. He was a great builder and erected at Thañjāvūr the magnificent temple known as the Bṛihadīśvara or Rājarājeśvara.

Rājarāja was followed by his equally brilliant son Rājendra (1012-44), undoubtedly the greatest ruler of his line, who asserted his power in Sri Lanka, the Chera and the Pāṇḍya countries and Vanavāsi and overcame the Chāḷukya Jayasiṁha. He then turned his eyes to the north in his desire to bring to his kingdom the waters of the sacred river Gaṅgā by the might of his arm. In less than two years, Rājendra successfully overcame the Eastern Chāḷukya territory, Kaliṅga and Dakshiṇa-Kosala and overcame the Pāla king Mahīpāla of east India.

To celebrate his triumph, Rājendra created 'a liquid pillar of victory' (*jalamaya-stambha*) in his new capital at Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram, 'the city of the Choḷa, the bringer of the Gaṅgā'. In a great irrigation

tank, now in ruins, the waters of the Gaṅga were poured from pots brought by the vassal-kings as the only tribute demanded by the emperor, who then assumed the title of *Gaṅgaīkoṇḍachoḷa*, 'the Choḷa king who brought the Gaṅgā'. As thanksgiving, he erected a large temple in honour of Śiva, also known as the Bṛihadīśvara, at his capital.

Rājendra then utilized his mighty navy for attacking and subduing the Śailendra king Saṅgrāmavijayottuṅgavarman of Śrīvijaya (Sumatra-Java). A number of place-names mentioned in his inscriptions have been understood as connoting places mostly in Malaya, included in the empire of Śrīvijaya. His conquest of Burma, the islands in the Eastern Archipelago, Sri Lanka Lakshadweep and Maldives clearly proves the efficiency of his unparalleled naval power. His great scholarship and literary attainments earned him the title *paṇḍita-Choḷa*. The marriage of his daughter Ammaṅgādevī to his own nephew, the Eastern Chālukya king Rājarāja, shows his diplomatic genius. The child born of this marriage was the great Rājendra-Choḷa Kulottuṅga.

Kulottuṅga succeeded his maternal uncles Rājādhirāja and Vīrarājendra in 1070 and ruled over a large empire that combined the Choḷa and Chāḷukya dominions. He was powerful not only on land but on sea. His power was felt even in distant Kaliṅga. Vikrama-Choḷa succeeded Rājendra-Choḷa.

Kulottuṅga II, the son of Vikrama-Choḷa effected elaborate renovations at the temple at Chidambaram. This building-activity was sustained in the reign of his son Rājarāja II (1150-73), whose title *Rāja-gambhīra*

is recorded in the *maṇḍapa* of the Dārāsuram temple. The growing zeal of the royal house in Śaivism is manifest in the stories of the Śaiva saints at Dārāsuram.

Rājarāja's nephew, Rājādhirāja, was followed by Kulottuṅga III, the last of the great Choḷa emperors, who, by his power and personality, checked the forces of disruption that had been steadily eating into the vitals of the empire. He was a great builder, and his region is marked by several addition to the glorious chapter of Choḷa architecture. His hand is evident not only in the Kampahareśvara temple at Tribhuvanam, the most important monument of his reign, but also at Kāñchi, Madurai, Chidambaram, Tiruvārūr, Tiruviḍaimarudūr and Dārāsuram.

ARCHITECTURE

To understand the architecture of the Choḷa temples, it is essential to know something of the pre- and post-Choḷa architecture. The Pallava temples of the seventh to the ninth centuries, the earliest in south India, have certain features which differentiate them from the later ones. As Jouveau-Dubreuil has very clearly illustrated,[1] the niche, the pavilion, the pillar- and pilaster-corbel and the horseshoe-shaped windows (*kūḍu*), among others, are the most important factors which help in the ascertainment of the dates of the monuments.

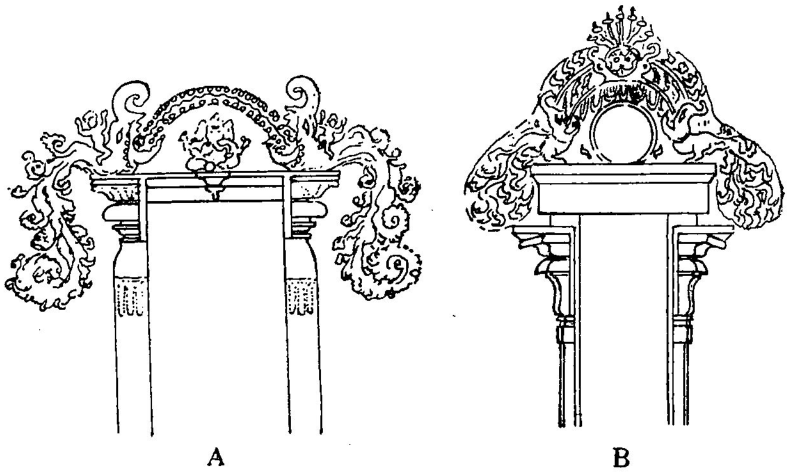


FIG. 1. *Niches:* A, *Pallava*; B, *Choḷa*. (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

[1] G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Archêlogie du sud de l'Inde*, pt. i (Paris, 1914), pp. 71-145.

A typical niche (fig. 1) in the earlier Pallava rock-cut monuments at Mahābalipuram and in the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñchīpuram is rather wide, and the *makara-toraṇa* decoration on the niche-top is flat, the floriated tail of the *makara* overflowing on the sides; but in a Choḷa niche, as in the later Pallava ones, the space is narrower and the decoration on the niche-top more round. The simulated railings for the pavilions on monuments at Mahābalipuram are quite different from their Choḷa counterparts. The *kūḍu* (fig. 2), which at the Mahābalipuram monuments has a shovel-headed finial,

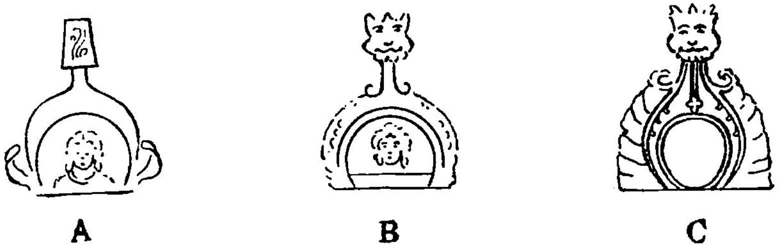


Fig. 2. *Kūḍus:* A, *Pallava*; B, *Choḷa*; C, *Vijayanagara.* (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

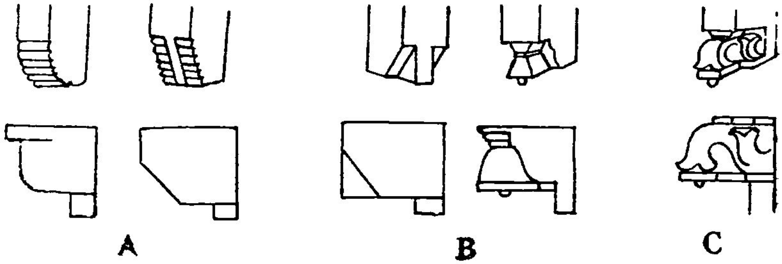


Fig. 3. *Pillar-capitals:* A, *Pallava*; B, *Choḷa*; C, *Vijayanagara. Top row, oblique view*; *bottom row, side view.* (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

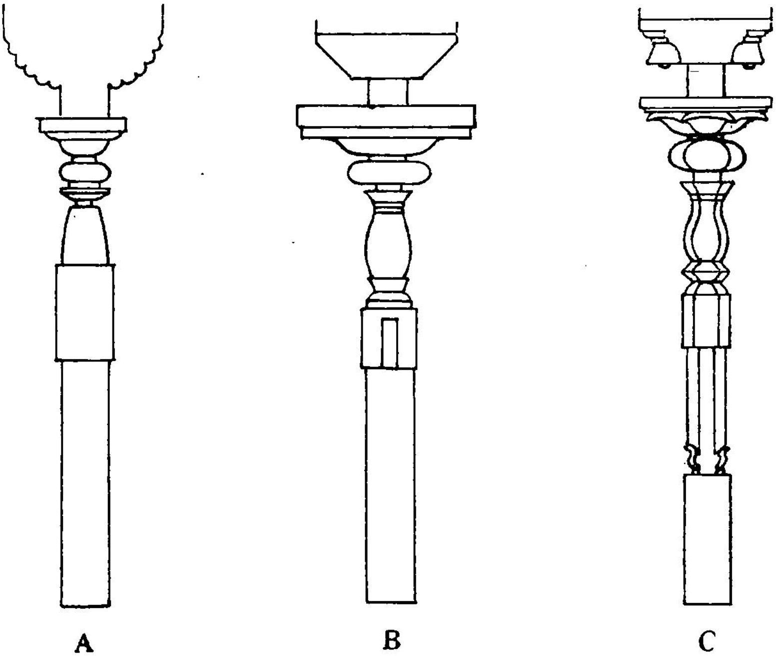


FIG. 4. *Pillars:* A, *Pallava*; B, *Choḷa*; C, *Vijayanagara*. (After Jouveau-Dubreauil)

develops a lion-head in the Choḷa monuments, and this continues thereafter.

The capital of the pillar (figs. 3 and 4) and pilaster in the Choḷa monuments, rectangular with its sides cut off in a slant at 45°, has the central portion projecting. It is from this that the later Vijayanagara lotus-corbels develop. It is easily seen that without the central projecting block the Choḷa corbel is not essentially different from the early Pallava one, where the same angle also occurs in addition to the rounded corbel.

The central shrine in the Pallava structural temples, like the Kailāsanātha at Kāñchīpuram, is prominent and the *gopura* is quite dwarfish. In the early Choḷa temples the shrine is magnified, and in the time of Rājarāja and his successors it becomes colossal, as one notices in the temples at Thañjāvūr, Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram, Dārāsuram and Tribhuvanam. The *gopura* in the early Choḷa temples, though larger in size than in the Pallava ones, is still comparatively short, and it is only in the late Choḷa period that gigantic *gopuras* come into being and dwarf the central shrine.

The earlier Pallava *dvāra-pālas* (door-keepers), with a very natural look and mostly with a single pair of arms, are replaced in the Choḷa structures by those with a fierce mien and four arms, the ones in the Thañjāvūr and Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram temples being typical examples: they carry the *triśūla* (trident) on their crowns, bear tusks protruding from their mouths and strike terror with their knit eye-brows, rolling eyes and hands always in the *tarjanī* (threatening) and *vismaya* (wonder) attitudes.

In the large Choḷa temples, long flights of steps from the sides lead to the platform, whence one enters the sanctum; the balustrade is massive, curls up at the end and is decorated on the exterior. Alternating *koshṭha-pañjaras* and *kumbha-pañjaras* (fig. 5) form a regular feature of the decoration, and the niches are flanked by pilasters crowned on the top by a curved roof-moulding adorned by two *kūḍus* with crowning lion-heads. The base of the entire series of these niches has *yāḷi*-decoration and at corners and intervals there are *makara*-heads with

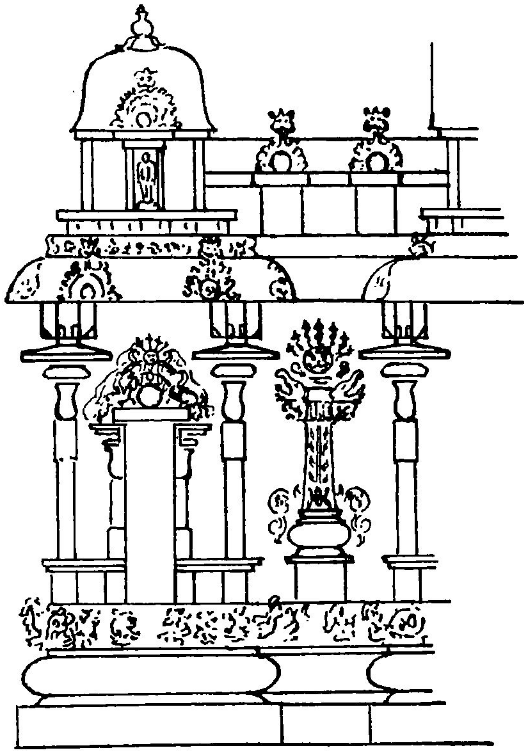


FIG. 5. *Koshṭha-pañjara* (*left portion*) and *kumbha-pañjara* (*right portion*). (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

warriors in action issuing from their mouths. The pavilions are usually two *pañjaras* flanking a *śālā* (wagon-roof pavilion), the former with a single finial and the latter with three. The *kumbha-pañjara* itself shows stages of development, and the earlier and simpler ones, which we find in the early Choḷa temples, become more decorative and developed in the later ones.

Separate *maṇḍapas*, which form a regular feature in the late Choḷa and Vijayanagara temples, with a number of pillars adorning them, are not so prominent in the early Choḷa structures, though the front of the temple is a long *maṇḍapa* for different forms of *bhoga*-worship. A large courtyard and small shrine against the enclosure-wall at the cardinal and inter-cardinal points for the *dik-pālas* (guardians of the directions) form a feature in the early Choḷa examples.

The following pages describe three of the most important Choḷa temples, viz., the two Bṛihadīśvara temples, respectively built by Rājarāja I (985-1012) and Rājendra (1012-44) at Thañjāvūr and Gaṅgaikoṇḍa-choḷapuram, and the Airāvateśvara temple, built by Vīrarājendra (1063-69) or Rājarāja II (1150-73) at Dārāsuram.

BṚIHADĪŚVARA TEMPLE, THAÑJĀVŪR

Thañjāvūr attained prominence under the Choḷas in the ninth century, Vijayālaya, the first great ruler of the dynasty (850-71), having captured it and made it his capital. The Bṛihadīśvara temple is a symbol of the greatness of the Choḷa empire under its author, emperor Rājarāja (985-1012), whose splendour it reflects. The long series of epigraphs incised in elegant letters on the plinth all round the gigantic edifice reveals the personality of the emperor.

The Bṛihadīśvara temple (pl. I) is a monument dedicated to Śiva, whom the emperor established here and named Rājarājeśvaram-uḍayār after himself. As we gather from the inscriptions running throughout the plinth, the king, on the two hundred and seventy-fifth day of the twenty-fifth year of the reign (1010), presented a gold-covered finial to be planted on the top of the *vimāna* of the temple.

The temple is the most ambitious of the architectural enterprises of the Choḷas and is a fitting symbol of the magnificent achievements of Rājarāja. The endowments that he made for this temple were numerous and in this munificence he was joined by not only the members of his family but high officials and noblemen. Several large images in bronze and gold were presented to this temple, and their ornaments, described in detail in the inscriptions, give a vivid picture of the contemporary jewellers' art. Even though most of the images and all the jewels have now disappeared,

there are still some exquisite bronzes, representing Naṭarāja, Tripurāntaka, Devī and Gaṇeśa, to give an idea of what great art-treasures were originally housed in the temple. True to his surname, *Śivapādaśekhara*, Rājarāja spared nothing for embellishing and endowing the great institution, and in this his sister Kundavai and other members of his family fully associated themselves. The endowments, together with the mention of even small weights and measures, the custom and method of receiving, maintaining and paying amounts or interest on amounts of donation for the regular conduct of special items of worship or for burning a lamp and similar details, give a vivid idea of the economic conditions of the time.

Fine arts were encouraged in the service of the temple: the sculptures, the paintings in the dark passages of the sanctum and even the inscriptions in elegant Choḷa Grantha and Tamil letters give an idea of the great art that flourished under Rājarāja. Dance and music were greatly cultivated and were equally employed to serve the temple: every evening it was at once an entertainment and a ritual that the townsfolk, assembled in the *maṇḍapa*, witnessed and enjoyed during the ceremony of the waving of lights and the chanting of the Veda and Devāram hymns. Cooks, gardeners, flower-gatherers, garland-makers, musicians, drummers, dancers, dance-masters, wood-carvers, sculptors, painters, choir-groups for singing hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, accountants, watchmen and a host of other officials and servants of the temple—all are referred to in the inscriptions as having been

endowed with adequate grants of land. Taking just a single fact, that Rājarāja constructed two long streets (*talichcheri*) for the accommodation of four hundred dancing women attached to the temple, we can well imagine the lavish scale on which he endowed the temple and its functions. The annual income from the lands set apart for the temple alone is estimated as one hundred and sixteen thousand *kalams* of paddy. The emperor's presentations in silver, gold and cash, not to mention various other gifts, form a staggering account of liberality.

The temple is constructed of granite, mostly of large blocks, a rock which is not available in the neighbourhood and had therefore to be brought from a distance—itself a colossal task. The plinth of the central shrine is 45·72 square m, the shrine proper 30·48 square m and the *vimāna* 60·96 m high. On the massive plinth, covered throughout with inscriptions, there are niches on three sides in two rows, containing representations of deities such as Śiva, Vishṇu and Durgā. On the southern wall the lower niches contain Gaṇeśa, Vishṇu with Śrī-devī and Bhū-devī, Lakshmī, a pair of *dvāra-pālas* (pl. II C), Vishṇvanugraha-mūrti, Bhikshāṭana (pl. II A), Vīrabhadra, a pair of *dvāra-pālas*, Dakshiṇā-mūrti, Kālāntaka (pl. III) and Naṭeśa. In the lower niches on the west are Hari-Hara, Ardhanārīśvara, a pair of *dvāra-pālas* and two Chandra-śekharas, one with and the other without halo. On the north, in the lower series, are Ardhanārīśvara, Gaṅgādhara, a pair of *dvāra-pālas*, Vīrabhadra (without the usual moustache but with a sword and shield),

Āliṅgana-Chandraśekhara (pl. II B), Śiva holding a *śūla* (spear), a pair of *dvāra-pālas*, Sarasvatī, Mahisha-mardinī and Bhairava. Of these, the first and last pairs of *dvāra-pālas* and the first and last four forms in niches are on the front porch of the temple, while all the rest are on the main walls of the *vimāna*. The top series shows a number of Tripurāntakas repeated in each niche. In the small circular space of the niche-tops are again carvings of deities like Gaṇeśa, Vṛishavāhana, Bhikshāṭana, Narasiṁha, Varāha, etc.

As we enter the temple from the east, there is a flight of steps leading to a pillared *maṇḍapa*, which is a later addition, so that originally the *dvāra-pālas* on either side and the princely warriors in the niches faced the visitor. Apart from the *maṇḍapa* and the steps leading to it, there are two other flights of steps on the north and south, as also between the front porch and the main shrine on either side. The Nandis on the *vimāna*, seated sideways but with their heads turned to the front, remind us of their counterparts at Mahābalipuram.

The stone constituting the huge *śikhara*, which is said to weigh 81·284 tonnes, is popularly believed to have been raised to its present height by being dragged on an inclined plane, which had its base at a place known as Sārapallam ('elevation from depression'), 6·44 km away.

The vast inner courtyard of the temple is about 152·40 × 76·20 m and is surrounded by a cloister. At the entrance there are two *gopuras*, widely separated from each other, the first larger but the second one better

decorated. The carvings on the latter, guarded by two monolithic *dvāra-pālas*, illustrate Śaivite stories like the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, Śiva protecting Mārkaṇḍeya and Arjuna winning the *pāśupata* weapon. Beyond the *gopuras*, in the court facing the central shrine and under the canopy of a *maṇḍapa* added in recent times, is a huge monolithic Nandi, indeed a fitting vehicle for the colossal *liṅga* installed in the central shrine, the height of which is more than 3·66 m. As is stated in the inscription, this *liṅga* was called *āḍavallān*, 'one who can dance well', and *dakshiṇa-meru-viṭaṅkan*—names associated with the deity at Chidambaram, whom the Choḷas greatly revered, and, adopted by them for this *liṅga*, which is also known, after Rājarāja, as Rājarājeśvaramuḍayār.

The dark passage surrounding the sanctum of the temple contains important specimens of sculptural art. Here there are three colossal sculptures, respectively located in the south, west and north and representing Śiva as holding a spear, seated Śiva carrying a sword and trident and with fierce mien and Śiva with ten arms dancing in the *chatura* pose as Vishṇu plays the drum and Devī sits in *padmāsana* with a lotus-bud and rosary in her hands.

The entire wall-space and ceiling of the passage were originally covered with exquisite paintings, most of them now obscured by a coat of painting executed during the Nāyaka period in the seventeenth century. The original paintings, have almost been exposed. On the western side, the entire wall-space is occupied by a huge panel in which Śiva as Dakshiṇā-mūrti is shown seated

on tiger-skin in a *yogic* pose approximating the *mahārāja-līlā* with the *paryaṅka-bandha* or *yoga-paṭṭa* across his waist and right knee, interestedly watching the dance of two *apsarases* (celestial nymphs), while Vishṇu, dwarf *gaṇas* and other celestial musicians play on the drum and other instruments (pl. IV), a few princely figures watch the scene and two saints, Sundara and Cheramān, hurry to the spot on elephant and horse. Up and further away is depicted a temple (architecturally a typical early Choḷa one) with Naṭarāja enshrined in it, outside which are seated princely devotees. Further down is painted the story of how Śiva came down in the form of an old man with a document in his hand to establish his right to carry away Sundara on his marriage-day to his abode at Tiruveṇṇainallūr. Still below is a lively scene of women cooking and food being served during the marriage-festivity. Beyond this, on the other side of the wall, is a large figure of Naṭarāja dancing in the golden hall at Chidambaram with priests and other devotees on one side and a stately prince, obviously Rājarāja, and three of his queens with followers including *kañchukis* and other attendants carrying rods of office behind them. On the opposite wall are some charming miniature figures of graceful women. A little further up is Rājarāja with his *guru* Karuvūr Devar (pl. V). Beyond this, on the wall opposite the northern one and facing the passage, are five heads peeping out of a partially-exposed painting.

The entire northern wall is covered by a gigantic figure of Tripurāntaka Śiva on a chariot driven by Brahmā. Tripurāntaka, accompanied by Kārttikeya

on peacock, Gaṇeśa on mouse and Kālī on lion, with Nandi in front of the chariot, is in the *ālīḍha* pose of a warrior with eight arms, all carrying weapons and in the act of using a mighty bow to overcome a host of aggressive and fearless demons with their womenfolk clinging to them. This painting is the greatest masterpiece of the Choḷa artist, distinguished by its power, grandeur, rhythm and composition and unparalleled by any contemporary painting or sculpture.

This representation of Śiva shows the earlier Pallava tradition, as in the Choḷa period Tripurāntaka generally stands in the *ābhaṅga* and sometimes in the *tribhaṅga* pose, with one of his legs planted on the head of either the dwarf Apasmāra or a lion. This great panel portrays several sentiments in one: the heroic sentiment in the expression on Tripurāntaka's face and form and in that of the vigorous *rākshasas* in action; the emotion of pity in the sorrowful faces of their women clinging to them in despair; the spirit of wonder in the paraphernalia of gods surrounding Śiva; and the sense of the grotesque in the attitude of the dwarf *gaṇas* and of Gaṇeśa hastening on his mouse. The Choḷas being great warriors and conquerors, and Rājarāja himself the greatest of them all, it is in the fitness of things that the theme of Tripurāntaka, the mighty warrior-god, is glorified here, virtually as the keynote of the Choḷa power.

The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinewy and the expression vivid and true of life; above all, there is an ease in the charming contours of the figures. They constitute the most valuable document of the painter's art during the days of the early

Cholas, and it is interesting to note that all the grace of south Indian classical painting that is seen in the earlier Pallava paintings at Śittannavāśal, Panamalai and Kāñchīpuram is continued in the present series.

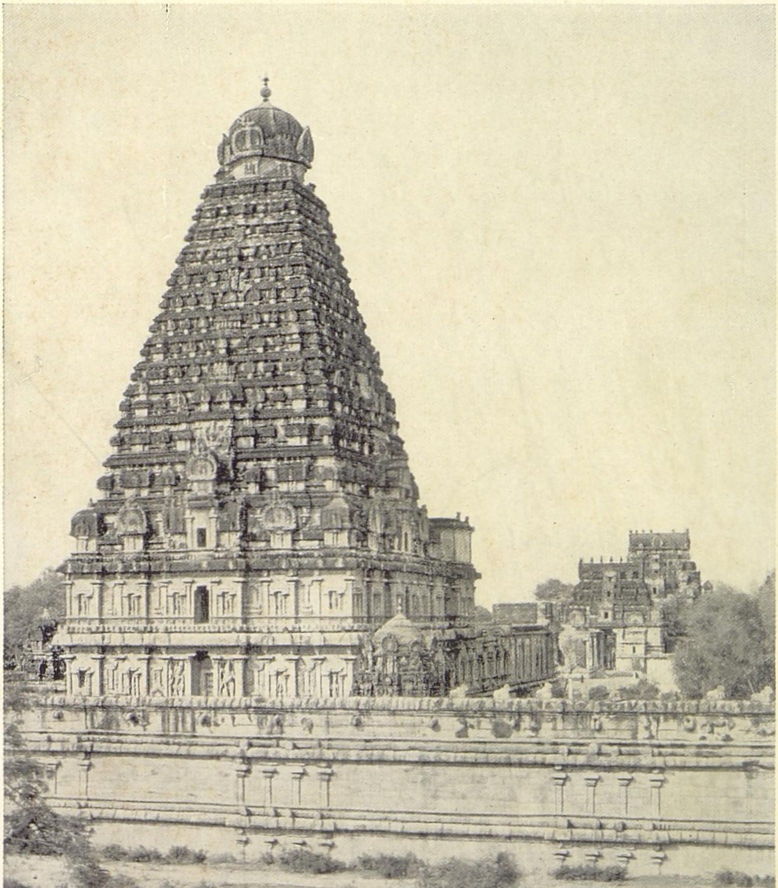
The highest achievement in plastic art in the Chola period is revealed in the fine series of the one hundred and eight dance-poses carved all around the inner walls of the first floor of the temple. They form an invaluable document in the history of Indian art and are the predecessor of the labelled dance-poses on the Chidambaram *gopuras*, with the important difference that at Thañjāvūr, Śiva himself, the lord of dance (Naṭarāja), is depicted as the dancer.

The temples of Devī near the Nandi-*maṇḍapa* and of Subrahmaṇya are later additions, the former during the time of Konerinmaikoṇḍān, a Pāṇḍya, of the thirteenth century, and the latter during the Nāyaka period in the seventeenth century. The shrine of Gaṇeśa and the *maṇḍapa* of Naṭarāja are also very late in date. The temple of Subrahmaṇya has exquisite carvings and is an excellent example of south Indian temple-architecture in the late medieval period.

BṚIHADĪŚVARA TEMPLE, GAṄGAIKOṆḌA-CHOḶAPURAM

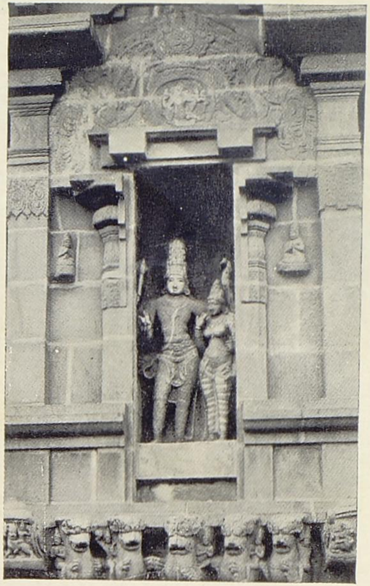
The great monument at Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram, the second Bṛihadīśvara Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷeśvara temple (pl. VI), rears its head nobly and bespeaks the imperial dignity of the capital that Rājendra (1012-44), the son of Rājarāja, established after his victorious march to east India up to the river Gaṅgā. The capital itself has disappeared: even the palace where the emperor dwelt does not exist except in ruins marked by brick débris about 1·5 km away from the temple, at a place known as Uḷkoṭṭai, where a mound even now called Māligaimeḍu, 'palace-mound', supplies bricks to the villages. In the vicinity is another village with a large tank known as Toṭṭikuḷam excavated by the king. About 1·5 km to the south of the temple is a third village, Vānaḍipaṭṭam, 'place of fireworks', which is believed to be the place where fireworks for the temple-festivals were prepared. Yet another place, Meikāvalputtūr, 1·5 km to the east, is so named as it was the place for the watchman of the temple. A fifth village, 1·5 km beyond the last one, is called Tīrthakuḷam, which had the *teppakuḷam*, the tank for floating the barge in the festivals of the temple. About 3 km to the west is the large water-reservoir known as Ponneri, now all in ruins. In this or in the reservoir outside the *gopura* of the temple, which is also dilapidated, must have been poured the sacred waters of the Gaṅgā, which Rājendra caused to be brought from east India.

At the temple itself a ruined *gopura* greets the



Bṛihadīśvara temple, Thañjāvūr. *See p. 14*

A



B

C

Bṛihadīśvara temple, Thañjāvūr : A, *Bhikshāṭana-mūrti*; B, *Āliṅgana-Chandraśekhara-mūrti*; C, *dvāra-pāla*. *See pp.* 16 *and* 17

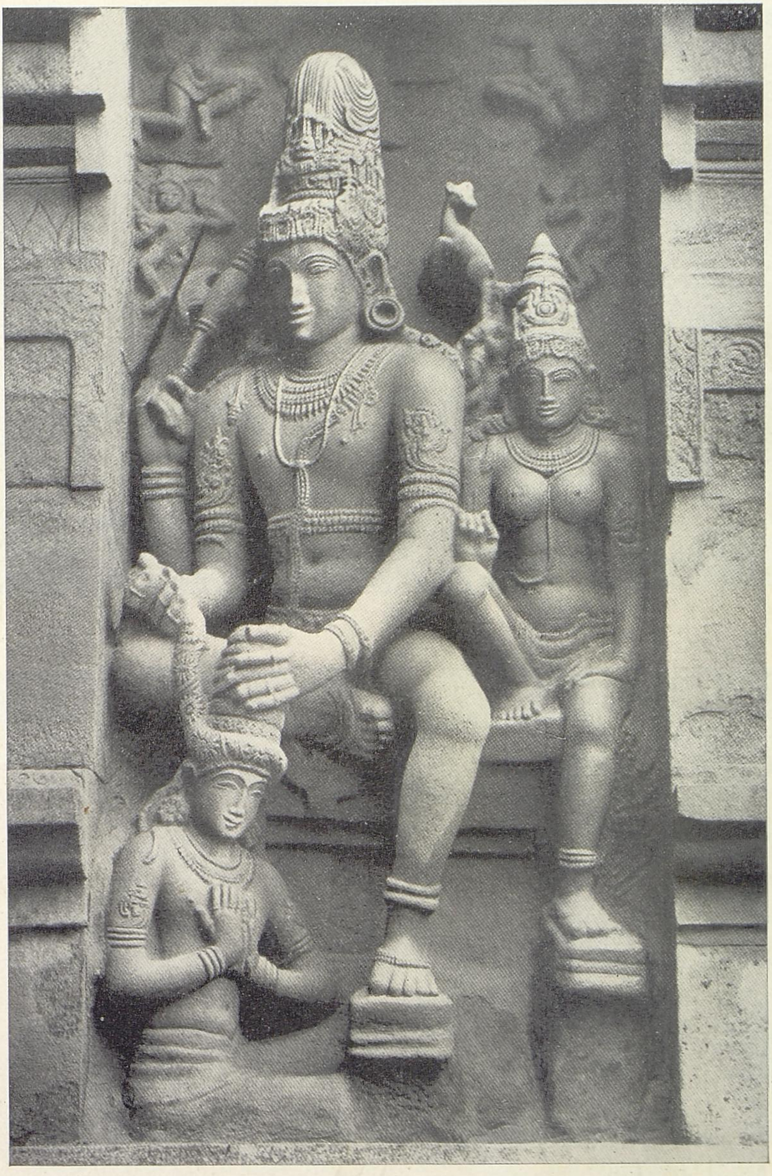
Bṛihadīśvara temple, Thañjāvūr : Kālāntaka. *See p. 16*

PLATE IV

Bṛihadīśvara temple, Thañjāvūr : musicians (painting). *See p. 19*

Bṛihadīśvara temple, Thañjāvūr : Rājarāja and his guru (painting). *See p. 19*

Bṛihadīśvara temple, Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram. *See p. 22*



Bṛihadīśvara temple, Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram : Chaṇḍeśānugraha-mūrti.
See p. 24

A

B

Bṛihadīśvara temple, Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram : A, *Naṭarāja*; B, *Śiva burning Manmatha. See pp. 24 and 25*

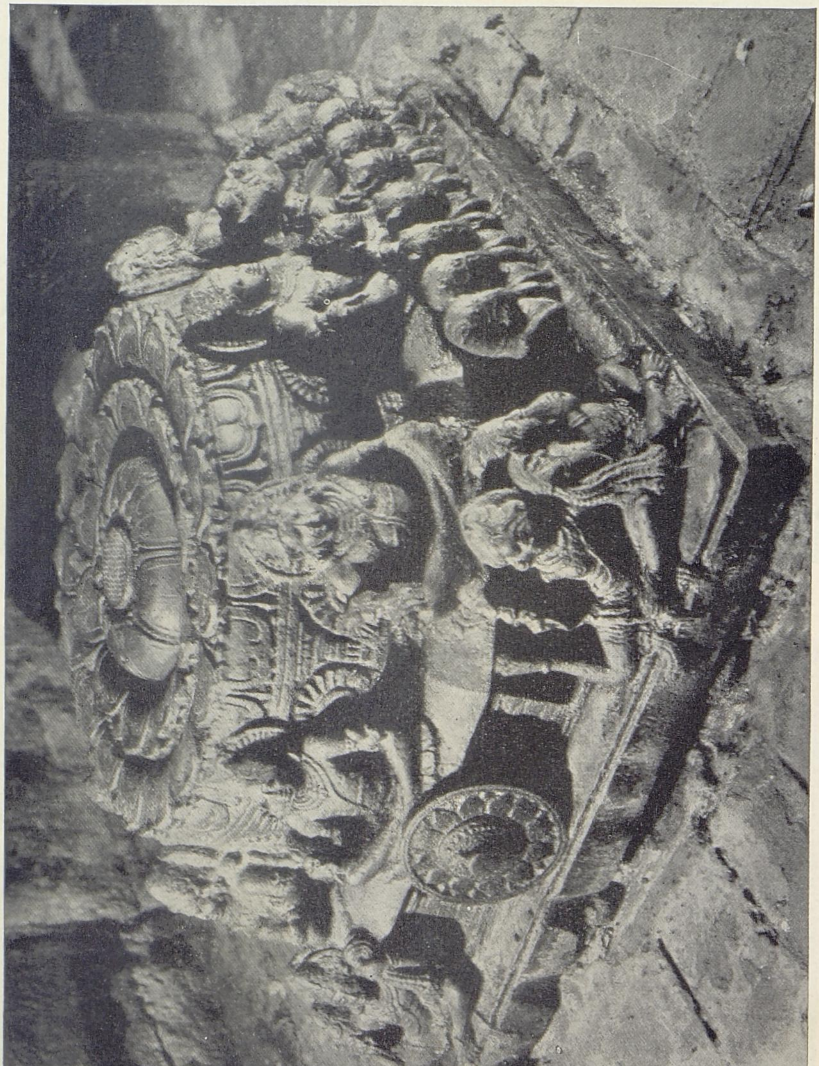
PLATE IX

A

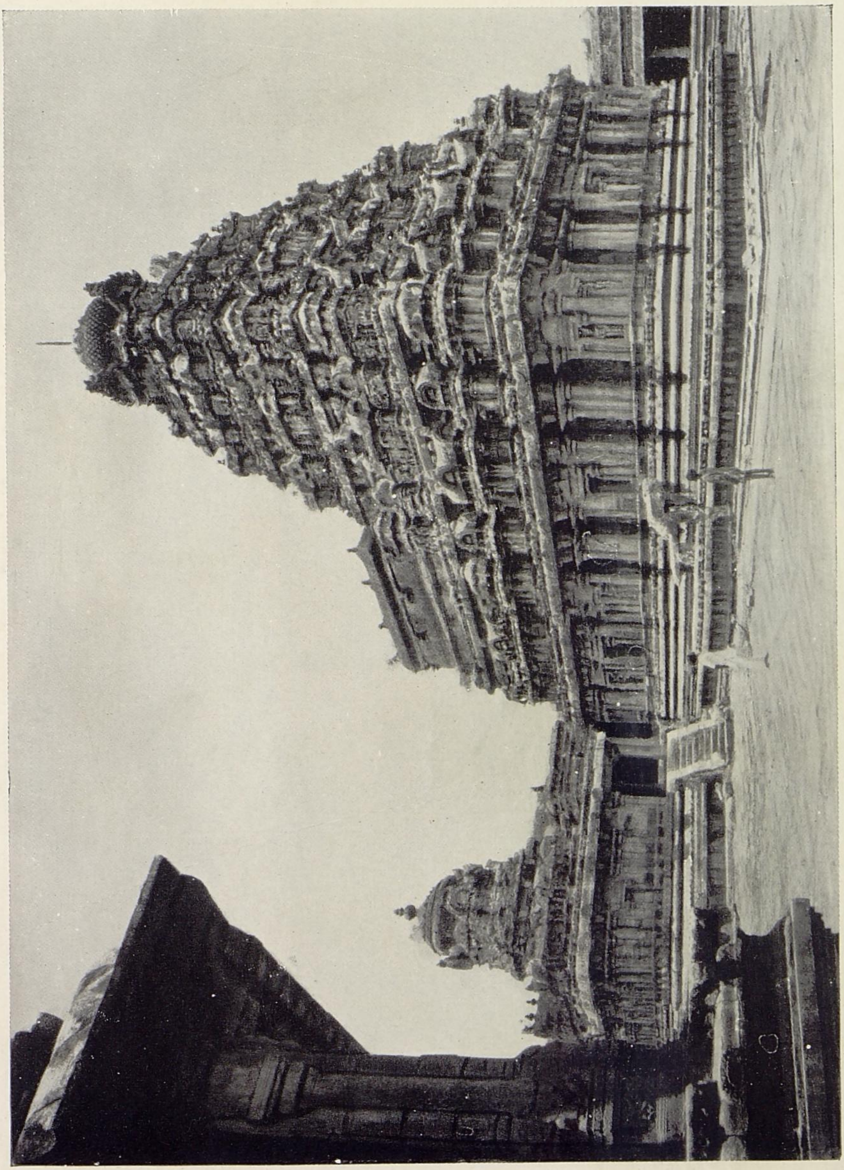
B

Bṛihadīśvara temple, Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram : A, *Brahmā*; B, *Kārttikeya*. *See pp.* 25 *and* 27

PLATE X

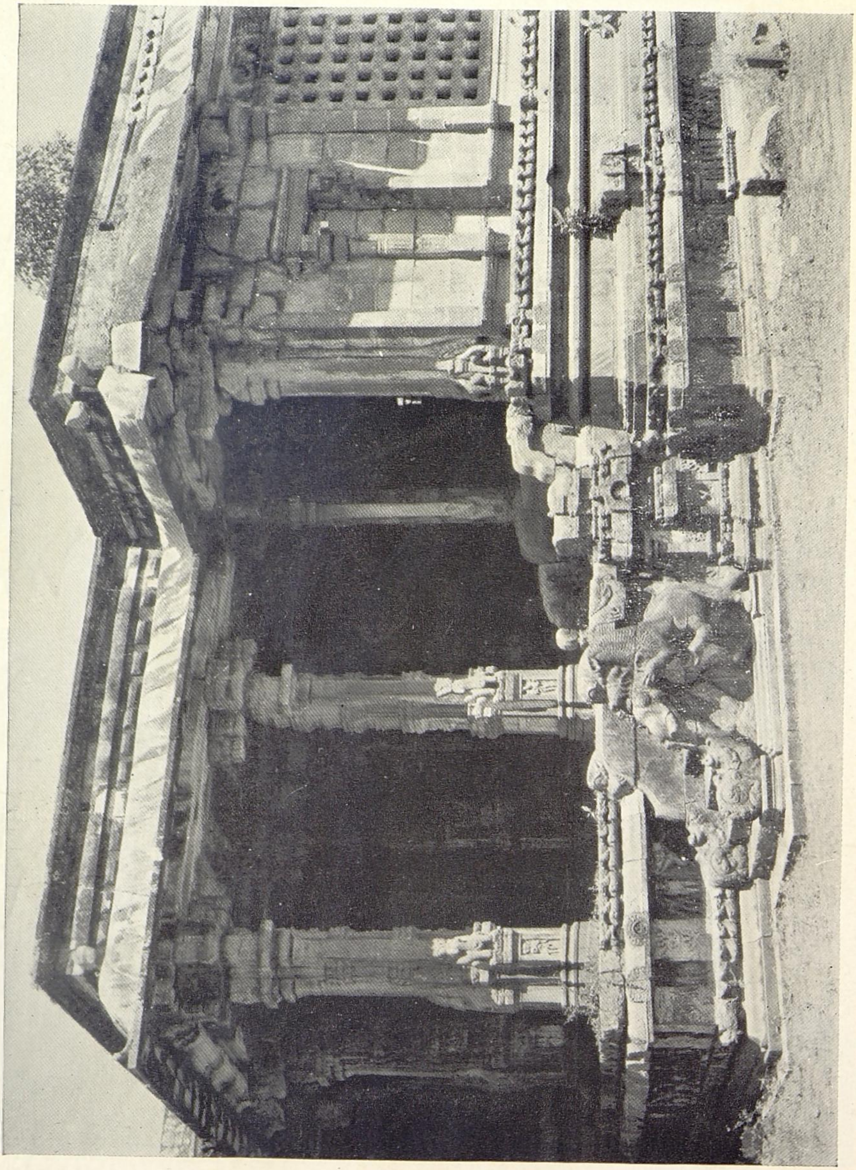


Bṛihadīśvara temple, Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram : navagrahas. *See p.* 27



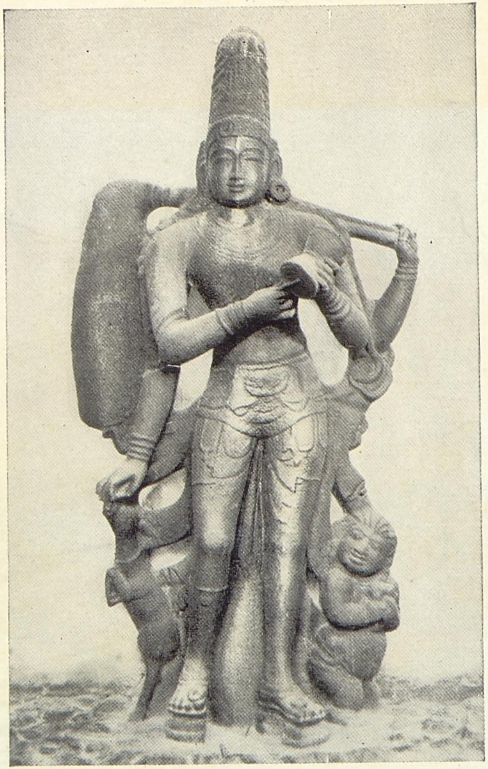
Airāvateśvara temple, Dārāsuram. *See p. 28*

PLATE XII



Airāvateśvara temple, Dārāsuram : maṇḍapa. *See p. 36*

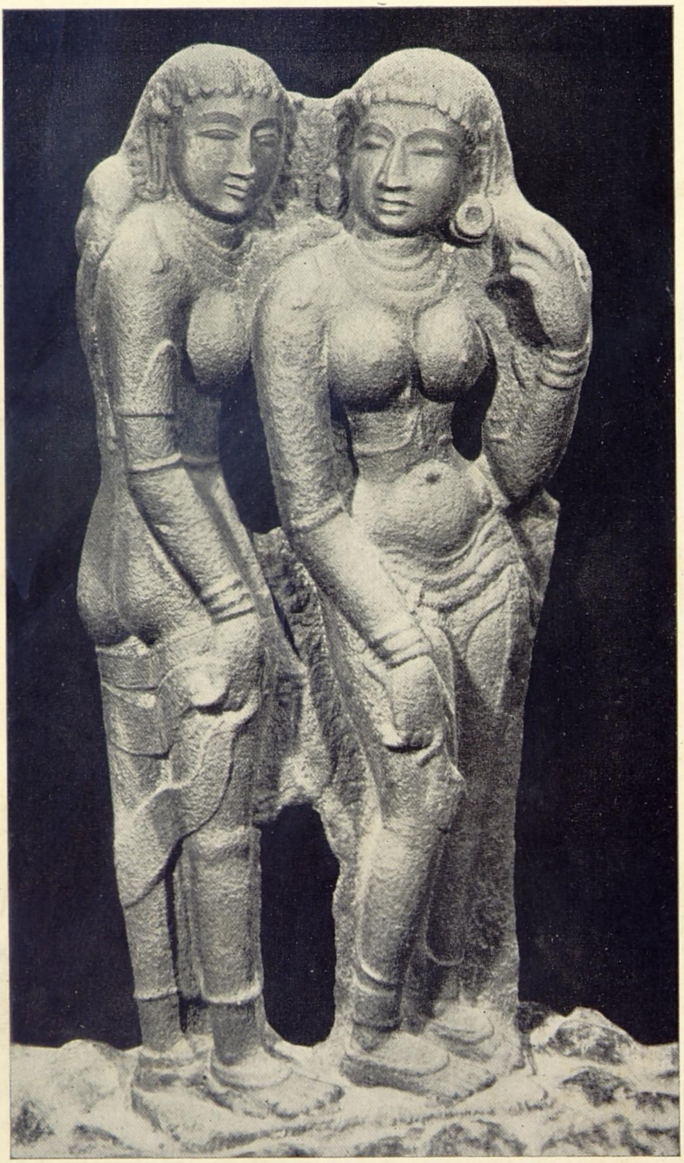
A



B

Airāvateśvara temple, Dārāsuram: A, *female chaurī-bearer;* B, *Kaṅkāla-mūrti.* *See pp. 31 and 36*

PLATE XIV



Airāvateśvara temple, Dārāsuram : wives of ṛishis. *See p. 36*

visitor: it is in the inner compound-wall of the temple, the outer and larger wall, with its *gopuras*, having been despoiled long ago. On entering through the *gopura*, one sees, beyond the *bali-pīṭha*, a huge bull, which, unlike its counterpart at Thañjāvūr, is not monolithic. Two flights of steps, on the northern and southern sides, as at Thañjāvūr, lead up to two *dvāra-pālas*—huge monoliths that guard the first entrance to a long closed *maṇḍapa*. The plinth of the entire *maṇḍapa* up to the *ardha-maṇḍapa* and *mukha-maṇḍapa* of the main temple is a part of the original structure itself, though its wall appears to have been renovated; the pillars and the platform are later additions.

The *ardha-maṇḍapa* of the temple is approached by two flights of steps from the north and south. Here the *mukha-maṇḍapa* is guarded on either side by two pairs of *dvāra-pālas*, and a third pair may be seen at the entrance to the east leading on from the main *maṇḍapa* to the *mukha-maṇḍapa*. Yet another pair of colossal *dvāra-pālas* guards the entrance to the sanctum. In the *mukha-maṇḍapa*, the walls on the east, on either side, are decorated with carvings representing Śiva in different aspects of *anugraha* (favour), such as Vishṇvānugraha-mūrti (bestowing grace on Vishṇu who worships him with his lotus-eye), Rāvaṇānugraha-mūrti (blessing Rāvaṇa who is penitent after having raised mount Kailāsa), Devyanugraha-mūrti (bestowing grace on Devī who worships the *liṅga*), Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti (going forth for his marriage attended by his *bhūta-gaṇas*, goblins, and the marriage itself with all the incidental rejoicing and merry-making), Mārkaṇḍeyānugraha-

mūrti (blessing his devotee Mārkaṇḍeya by rescuing him from Yama, the god of death, whom he overcame) and Chaṇḍeśānugraha-mūrti (blessing Chaṇḍeśa, who did not refrain from cutting off his father's legs for having interfered with his worship of Śiva and bathed the *liṅga* with the milk of cows in his care). To the north-east is a beautiful large-sized panel, a masterpiece of Choḷa art, which shows Śiva bestowing his grace on Chaṇḍikeśvara.

The temple is 54·86 m high and in arrangement follows its Thañjāvūr predecessor. But while the latter is tall and stately, with its contour straight and severe, suggestive of strength, the present one is shorter and its contour more graceful and delicate and somewhat feminine in its lack of angularity.

The sculptures in the temple are less numerous than in the Thañjāvūr one but are of the same nature. Here again we have representations of princely warriors, with swords and shields. Lakshmī and Sarasvatī are shown seated in niches as at Thañjāvūr. In the northern and southern niches of the central shrine are Bhikshā-ṭana-mūrti and Chaṇḍeśānugraha-mūrti (pl. VII), the former disfigured with a plaster-coat. In the southern niches a figure, presumably that of Dakshiṇāmūrti, is missing: the rest variously represent dancing Gaṇeśa, Ardhanārīśvara beside the bull, Hari-Hara and Naṭarāja (pl. VIII A) dancing along with Kālī and Bhṛiṅgi attended by *gaṇas* and Kāraikkālammaiyār playing cymbals. On the sides of the niche Vishṇu plays the drum, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya approach the scene on their vehicles, and Devī, with her arm resting on the bull beside her, watches

the dance. To the west is Śiva as Gaṅgādhara appeasing Devī who is forlorn and sullen on account of her lord having received Gaṅgā on his matted locks. On the sides of the niches is narrated the story of Bhagīratha's penance to bring Gaṅgā down to the earth. Then there are Liṅgodbhava, Vishṇu with his consorts and Kārttikeya or Indra and Śiva as Umā-sahita. On the walls of the niche with Umā-sahita, Vishṇu is shown adoring him by offering his eye as a flower. The northern niches contain the figures of Kālāntaka with the story of Mārkaṇḍeya on the sides of the niche, eight-armed Mahishamardinī standing beside her lion, Brahmā with a beard, accompanied by his consorts Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī (pl. IX A), Bhairava with eight arms, Śiva as Madanāntaka burning Manmatha (pl. VIII B), one of his hands in *tarjanī* (threatening) attitude, Manmatha and his consort Rati, the former first shooting with a bow and then helpless, and other gods intervening on his behalf. The lowest series of panels on the base of the temple shows seated lions with one of the paws raised and rearing in an attitude usually found in the Pallava temples of the time of Rājasiṁha (690-715) and with analogues at Prambanan in Indonesia.

The niches are arranged in the same fashion as at Thañjāvūr: there is a large central niche flanked on each side by two smaller ones, all projecting out of the main wall, with a *kumbha-pañjara* pattern between each pair of niches. Noteworthy are the roof-forms on the respective tiers, in the shape of *śālā*, *koshṭha* and *kūḍu*. In the eaves of the lowest niches are bracket-figures of the *gaṇas* of Śiva and rearing lions. The principal niche on each side

is devoted to one or the other of the gods of the Trinity—Brahmā, Vishṇu, and Śiva: Śiva Dakshiṇā-mūrti on the south, Vishṇu with consorts on the west and Brahmā with consorts on the north. The bays of the niches at every stage have rows of *yāḷi* as decoration, with *makara*-heads at the extreme ends from which warriors are issuing. The niche-tops are decorated in a circular fashion as in the Thañjāvūr temple.

The space on the temple-base below the *yāḷi*-frieze is covered with inscriptions, though not as completely as at Thañjāvūr. In the niches, numerous iconographic forms are repeated in a different order and with the addition of a few more, such as Varāha rescuing the Earth, space for the representations being made available by the utilization of the space for the *kumbha-pañjaras* in other niches in addition to the five main niches.

The shrine to the north of the main temple, dedicated to Chaṇḍikeśvara, contains a large fine carving representing the steward of Śiva's household. There are two other shrines, respectively to its north and south, contemporary with the main temple, on either side of the main shrine. There is no deity in the southern shrine, but in the shrine to the north is installed an image of Devī of a later date. That this shrine was also originally intended for Śiva is indicated by the bull guarding the door. A feature to be noted here is that the bull is quite different from those of Choḷa workmanship and resembles those of the earlier Chāḷukya period. The *dvāra-pālas* in the two shrines and the images in the niches, wherever they are extant, are contemporary with, but less carefully executed than those in the main temple.

To the south-west of the main temple is a small temple with a large image of Gaṇeśa, his trunk curling round the sweets (*modaka*), as is usual in some early Choḷa representations of the deity.

Beyond and to the north of the shrine of Chaṇḍikeśvara is another shrine, wherein is housed a fine early image of Mahishamardinī. Further beyond is a large representation of lion in plastered brickwork, through the body of which runs a flight of steps leading into a large well, known as Siṁhakiṇar. The popular story goes that the Choḷa king got water from the Gaṅgā and poured it into this well, so that there could be a perpetual supply of it for the bath (*abhisheka*) of the deity.

Among the bronzes in the temple the following are specially noteworthy: a large Somāskanda, Bhogaśaktidevī, another Devī and Mahāsena or Kārttikeya as war-god carrying a *vajra*, shield and cock (pl. IX B). The significance of the remarkable figure of the war-god to the ideal of the royal warrior Rājendra cannot be underestimated.

The unique slab with the nine planets (*navagraha*) (pl. X) in the large temple, hidden in total darkness, is an eloquent testimony to the cosmopolitan spirit of Rājendra, who, after his northern conquests, combined northern and southern elements to produce this most interesting group.

The most remarkable carving here, the Chaṇḍeśānugraha-mūrti panel, is almost a suggestion of the laurels won by Rājendra through the grace of Śiva, and he humbly presents himself as a devotee of the Lord, who blessed Chaṇḍeśa.

AIRĀVATEŚVARA TEMPLE, DĀRĀSURAM

As one enters the Airāvateśvara temple at Dārāsuram (pl. XI), one finds a large *gopura*, the upper portion of which is completely lost but the form of which may be imagined from the complete second (inner) *gopura*. The larger *prākāra*-wall all around the temple, decorated with couchant bulls at intervals, is in continuation of the second *gopura*. Supporting the *gopura* are pillars in a row, which have some fine carvings of lovely *apsarases*, Śiva-*gaṇas* and other motifs. Beyond the *gopura* is a large *bali-pīṭha* with beautiful lotus-petal decorations. Towards one side of it, just behind the large Nandi, is a quaint standing dwarf Śiva-*gaṇa* blowing a conch, which, together with the bull, is a fine artistic product. Long narrow strips of frieze, with a whole series of miniature figures dancing in lovely poses with musical accompaniment, provide, even as one enters, the key-note of the decoration in this temple *nitya-vinoda*, perpetual entertainment.

On either side at the entrance are small balustrades, intended to flank steps (now missing), with beautiful *makara*-decoration on their outer side. The *makara* with a floriated tail, short legs and curled-up snout and a pair of dwarf *gaṇa*-riders on it forms a lovely decoration. At the entrance the visitor is greeted by a beautiful *maṇḍapa* with a number of pillars, to be approached through an extension of it towards the south, with flights of steps on the east and west. The balustrades for these steps are nicely decorated on the outer side with a long curling

trunk issuing out of a lion-head; a similar second one runs parallel to the trunk of an elephant, lost in the open jaws of a *makara* whose floriated tail is curled up, to balance the complete design. The elephant is beautifully decorated and has on its back dwarf *gaṇas* viz., the *śaṅkha-* and *padmanidhis*. The eight outer pillars of the *maṇḍapa* are supported by squatting *yāḷis* with their trunks curled up and with pronounced abaci. The lotus-petal decoration below has prominent petal-tips. The capital, as in the other pillars in the *maṇḍapa*, has the beginning of the *bodhika*-decoration, which, in the late Choḷa and Vijayanagara periods, develops into the lotus-decoration. Each of the four inner pillars is divided into sections, three oblong and two polygonal. The decoration which later develops into the *nāga-bandha* is just present, and, as in other early Choḷa structures, is only a decorative pattern of the double-geese. The rectangular portions of the pillars are decorated with small panels illustrating mythological stories, such as the attack of Manmatha, the penance of Pārvatī, the prayer of the gods for a son of Śiva, the birth of Kumāra, Śiva's marriage, his fight with the *asuras*, etc. On four pillars which lead on to the extension of the *maṇḍapa*, short inscriptions are repeated, describing it as *svasti śrī-Rāja-gambhīran tiru-maṇḍapam*. If the elephants on the sides of the balustrades of the steps mentioned above are lovely specimens, there are equally lovely galloping horses, one on either side of the *maṇḍapa*-extension immediately beside the flight of steps, with a huge wheel carved behind it, which gives the *maṇḍapa* the semblance of a chariot. The front of the base of this *maṇḍapa*-extension is decorated at the bottom with panels

showing: Śiva fighting the Tripuras from the chariot and as Kālāntaka repelling Yama for protecting the son of Mṛikaṇḍu whom he had blessed with a long life; Śiva burning Kāma who dared attack him with his flowery bow and arrow even while his lovely queens, including Rati, and other gods pray for his being spared; and the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice by Vīrabhadra. Above this, in five niches at intervals, are Agni, Indra, Brahmā, Vishṇu and Vāyu, all standing with hands in the attitude of reverence to Śiva. It may be noted that the original plan of the flight of steps east of the *maṇḍapa* has been completely spoilt by later renovations, and the symmetry, which no doubt originally existed, is now lost.

The main *maṇḍapa* is in continuation of the *mukha-maṇḍapa* of the main shrine and is covered completely on the northern side at the extreme ends of the eastern and southern sides, providing on the outer face of the wall as in other portions of the temple, the usual pattern of niches with pilasters in between. The same pattern of alternating niche and pilaster with a main niche for every pair of subsidiary niches is found on the outer walls of the second *maṇḍapa*, which is a completely closed one, all the pillars being inside. The main *maṇḍapa* is decorated with a pair of dwarf *yakshas* guarding *padma*-and *śaṅkha-nidhis* in niches on either side on the east. These figures, like all the other special forms of deities in the niches, are of fine-grained black basalt, distinguished from the granite used in the entire structure. The pillars of the first (main) *maṇḍapa* contain beautiful patterns of decorative creepers so arranged that in the circular medallions created therein are figures dancing in diverse

poses, musicians and sometimes forms of deities such as Gaṅgādhara and Tripurāntaka. These figures adorn panels arranged in tiers of niches and *śālās* on the sides of other pillars. Even where the pillars have purely decorative patterns, there are figures, mostly in dance-poses or playing musical instruments, introduced very deftly into them.

The ceiling shows square and rectangular patterns, bands of which are all filled with decorative designs. Almost all the central medallions contain similar dance and musical groups. The pillar-capitals here have the precursor of the *bodhika*-type, the ornamental precursor of the *nāga-bandha* being also present.

As we enter the next *maṇḍapa*, which leads on to the *ardha-maṇḍapa* and the main shrine, there are in niches Devī with lotus, and *ratna-kalaśa* (pot filled with gems) and Nandikeśvara standing with hands in adoration on one side and saint Kaṇṇappa and seated Sarasvatī on the other. It should be noted that the openings of the main *maṇḍapa* have been bricked up here and there in modern times for converting portions into rooms and the centre of the northern side has been improvised into a cell for Devī; the *chaurī*-holding *dvāra-pālikas* (pl. XIII A), fixed on either side of the doorway, also improvised, are lovely and belong to the same period as the other fine sculptures arranged in the niches of the main temple itself. The pillars in the *maṇḍapa* adjoining the main one, which leads on to the main shrine, are somewhat simpler, notwithstanding their being polygonal and with flower-petal decoration at intervals and corbels, which recall the Chālukya type.

The *mukha-maṇḍapa*, approached by long flights of steps from the north and south, marks the end of the *maṇḍapas* and the beginning of the main shrine. Here there is a couchant Nandi smaller than the one at the start of the main *maṇḍapa*. The *dvāra-pālas* of the main shrine are depicted as furious and with huge clubs; they have four hands in the threatening attitude (*tarjanī*), bear tusks and carry *triśūla* on their bound-up hair decorated with the lion-head design. The garland-decoration of their *yajñopavīta* again recalls Chālukya influence.

A six-headed Kumāra standing to the left of the entrance of the main cell is a fine sculpture.

The walls of the *maṇḍapa* and the main shrine contain niches, some of which still possess exquisite specimens of early Choḷa sculpture; the other niches either have no image or have poor modern substitutes in brick-and-plaster. Of the noteworthy Choḷa specimens are: a fine Ardhanārīśvara, unique of its kind, with three faces and eight arms; a four-armed Nāgarāja having snake-hoods over his head and hands joined in adoration; Agastya, the dwarf sage, seated with one of his hands in the teaching attitude and the other carrying a water-vessel; another seated sage carrying the rosary and manuscript; dancing Mārtāṇḍa-Bhairava or Aghora-Vīrabhadra with four hands, three heads and a terrible countenance; Śiva as Śarabha destroying Narasiṁha (in a niche to which a small *maṇḍapa*, reached by a flight of steps, is provided); standing Gaṇeśa; Dakshiṇā-mūrti attended by sages seated under a banyan-tree and expounding the highest truth; Liṅgodbhava

Śiva, issuing from a flaming pillar, Brahmā and Vishṇu unable to reach the top and bottom, adoring the *liṅga;* Brahmā; eight-armed Durgā on the severed head of buffalo; seated Devī as Bhuvaneśvarī carrying *pāśa* and *aṅkuśa*, in two of her hands, the other two being in *abhaya* and *varada*; Śiva as Tripurāntaka, carrying the axe, deer, bow and arrow; multi-armed Gajāntaka destroying a demon in the guise of an elephant and dancing against the spread-out hide of the animal in the *bhujaṅga-trāsita* pose, Devī shrinking away from him in fear; Bhairava with six arms standing with his dog behind him; a sage carrying a water-vessel and teaching two disciples; and Maheśa-mūrti seated with three heads and four arms carrying the spear, axe, rosary and water-vessel. All these sculptures, made of polished black basalt, are of exquisite workmanship.

In describing the sides of the main shrine, it should be mentioned that the lower half of the base is of the same type all over including the *maṇḍapas*. The lowest series of panels above the lotus-petal decoration is divided by decorative bands and in them are *yāḷis*, couchant or rearing, in pairs or single, women dancing to the accompaniment of music, dwarf *gaṇas* in queer poses, dancing, playing a drum, blowing a conch, carrying the *chauri* or holding their hands in wonder, often in the company of a bull. Above this is a long *yāḷi*-frieze, which is again repeated a little below the niches. There are miniature decorative carvings a little below the second row of *yāḷis*, above it and immediately below the niches. In the main shrine the carving below the niche depicts scenes illustrating stories of Śaivite saints, some of which

have labels in Tamil.[1] Separating these scenes there are miniature carvings of dancing figures and Śiva or Devī in different attitudes.

On the outer walls, on either side of the niches, are also carved fine figures corresponding to those enshrined in the niches, simulating the tradition of the earlier temples at Thañjāvūr and Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram. Thus, Gaṇeśa's niche is flanked by *bhūtagaṇas*, dwarf attendants, carrying offerings with the deity's vehicle, the mouse; the niche of Dakshiṇā-mūrti is flanked by exquisitely-carved figures of *ṛishis*, which are, however, hidden by a later brick structure. The niches of the main temple are three in number. The central one, larger than the flanking ones, has a double-pillar decoration on its either side. It has a top fashioned as a *śālā*, while the tops of the niches on either side illustrate the *koshṭha*-pattern. The double-pillar decorations between these have the lion-headed *kūḍu* for their top. Between the niches and the double-pillar decorations, all of which project forward, there are *kumbha-pañjara* decorations against the main wall itself. Above the niches, near the caves, there is a whole row of dwarf *gaṇas*, dancing, playing musical instruments or otherwise merry. Against the roof here and there are *kūḍus*. Gaping *bhūta*-heads serve as gargoyles for discharging water from the roof. The *kūḍu*-, pavillion- and *śālā*-patterns are repeated in the different tiers of the *vimāna*.

All around the main shrine is a broad strip, 3·66 m wide, paved with granite slabs, and a low wall, 25·40 cm

[1]See Appendix, p. 40.

high, of the same material, the latter beautifully carved with the lotus-pattern and Nandis seated in between. This beautiful row of Nandis is unfortunately mutilated everywhere. The existence of outlets for water at intervals shows that it was intended to be a sort of a pleasant water-receptacle to give the idea of a pool surrounding the temple in spring and keep the atmosphere cool in summer. A number of circular rings with low rims, carved out of stone, appear to have been lamps.

The gargoyle for discharging water from the main cell is on the north. It is long, has a dip and double course, is decorated with two lion-head motifs, one at the source and the other where it starts the lower course at the point of the dip, and discharges water into a large well-carved water-reservoir with the figures of dancing *gaṇas* on the sides. The *gomukha* is supported at the base by a caryatid dwarf *gaṇa*, as in the gargoyle in the temple at Thañjāvūr (though the figure here is standing), by a rearing *yāḷi* and again by triple *gaṇas* at the end.

In the vicinity of the main temple near this gargoyle is the shrine of Chaṇḍikeśvara, similar to the one at Thañjāvūr.

The inner side of the entire *prākāra*, surrounding the large paved coutryard, has a beautiful series of *maṇḍapa*-decoration, which, in the main, is one long row of pillar-cloister with cells at intervals for deities, some of which have disappeared. At the four corners the cloister has been enlarged and embellished into *maṇḍapas*, approached by steps decorated with balustrades, showing interesting motifs as a ferocious lion pouncing on an elephant with curled-up trunk lost in the mouth of a

makara and with its sides covered up at the points where a niche or trellis-window is added as decoration (pl. XII). The base, as usual, has fine panels showing scenes of dance, jugglery tricks, themes of sculptural pun and so forth. All these points are best observed in the *maṇḍapa* towards the north-west. Towards the noth-east there is a similar *maṇḍapa*, but lacking the trellis-work. Here the pillars are well-decorated with dance-figures; the ceiling also is profusely covered with beautiful panels and medallions filled with *danseuses* and musical figures.

The top of this *maṇḍapa* is decorated with *śālā*-roof suggesting Naṭarāja's *sabhā*: this is the *nāṭya-maṇḍapa* of the temple—a fact clearly borne out by not only the sculptures on the pillars and ceiling but also by a carving on the base of Vishṇu playing the drum in front of the *maṇḍapa*. Though now in a bad state of preservation, this must have been the place where originally the Naṭarāja bronze should have been housed. To the east, beyond this, is the *yāga-śālā*, and further on is the representation of a king and queen, in addition to figures of deities. The two portrait-statues are probably intended to represent either Vīrarājendra or Rājarāja II, either of whom was responsible for this temple, and his queen.

In the cloistered hall to the west of the *nāṭya-maṇḍapa* there is a remarkable group of large carvings in the round, representing Śiva as Kaṅkāla-mūrti (pl. XIII B), a number of *ṛishi-patnīs*, the wives of sages of Dārukāvana who attended on Śiva and were astonished at his beauty. The garments of one of the women in a pair (pl. XIV) are slipping off and the other has a finger on

her lips indicative of wonder. *Gaṇa*-dwarfs are playing the drum or sounding a gong in quaint and picturesque attitudes. Kaṅkāla-mūrti himself is calm and serene and fondles a deer with one of his hands, while a dwarf-attendant carries his begging bowl. Of the women, some carry ladles for offering food to the divine beggar. The composition is one of the great masterpieces of Choḷa art. There are also carvings of Manmatha and Rati on a chariot and Kaṇṇappa-nayanār, the saintly hunter.

Beyond this are one hundred and eight Śivāchāryas (Śaiva saints) in a row fixed in the wall, with their names and short descriptions incised below each. To the south a large portion of the pillared cloister has tumbled down.

In the roof of the niches, all along the wall of the *maṇḍapa* to the north, there are representations of *ṛishis*, which, together with similar figures in the niches, point to the element of peace and tranquillity, as opposed to the heroic element which is the key-note of sculpture in the temples at Thañjāvūr and Gaṅgaikoṇḍachoḷapuram. The long series of stories from the *Śiva-purāṇa* and Śiva devotees portrayed here also suggest the same. When we remember that this was the period when the stories of the Śaiva kings and the sacred *Devāram* hymns were collected together, we can understand the purpose of this. It is not unlikely that the name Dārāsuram has something to do with Dārukā-vana, especially when we consider, the magnificent group of sculptures representing Kaṅkāla and the *ṛishi-patnīs* described above.

The *liṅga* of the temple is known as Rājarājeś-varam-uḍayār, and the story goes that the temple was

erected by Rājarāja himself to satisfy a cowherdess who made a gift of the huge stone used as the *śikhara* of the large temple at Thañjāvūr in accordance with her wishes that there should be a temple in her village.

Adjacent to this is the shrine of Devī, which is contemporary with the main temple. The balustrade-decoration of *yāḷis* with riders on either side as we enter the shrine are fine works of art. Some lattice-window carvings are also worthy of note. The gargoyle, which presents a dwarf *gaṇa* in quaint pose both to receive and disgorge the water from the cell, is interesting even in its mutilated state. The niches of the outer walls of the shrine contain forms of Devī. The tiny dance-figures in the lattice-windows and the *nāga*-decoration are remarkable.

The profuse occurrence of dance and musical scenes and of figures in various dance-poses cannot but attract the attention of the visitor. The Choḷa period was one of great patronage and encouragement for dance and music, and when we remember that the *gopuras* at Chidambaram, of slightly later date, have a number of dance-figures to illustrate the various *sthānas* and *karaṇas* of Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*, we can understand the reason for this exuberance of *nāṭya*-figures in the embellishment of the temple.

The narration of stories of the Śaiva saints, with depictions of temples, ponds or rivers full of fish, shells and other aquatic animals and, in one case, a crocodile, along with the frequent figures of kings with royal paraphernalia, such as peacock-feather parasol, sages and Brāhmaṇas with umbrellas in their hands and similar themes strongly recall the corresponding scenes of an

earlier date at Borobudur and Prambanan in Indonesia. In fact, even the lions in the lowermost panels of the base of the main shrine remind us strongly of their counterparts at Prambanan. This is not at all surprising, as the intercourse between the Eastern Archipelago and India was considerable in the Choḷa period, most of these islands being under Choḷa sway for at least some time. The decorative elements, specially the creeper-patterns providing medallions for dance-figures on the pillars and some of the pillar-capitals recall their Rāshṭrakūṭa and Chālukya counterparts. This is easily accounted for by the constant Choḷa, Rāshṭrakūṭa and Chālukya inroads into the territories of one another. A *dvāra-pāla* figure, which was originally in the Dārāsuram temple but has now been removed to the Thañjāvūr temple, is of Chālukya workmanship and contains an inscription on its pedestal in early Choḷa letters, mentioning that it was brought by the Choḷa king as a war-trophy after the sack of Kalyāṇapura, the capital of the Western Chālukyas.

APPENDIX

STORIES OF ŚAIVA SAINTS DEPICTED AT DĀRĀSURAM[1]

The series of stories illustrated in miniature panels as the top line of the base of the *vimāna* and the *maṇḍapa* in the Dārāsuram temple is full of narrative interest. Most of them are explained by means of labels incised in characters of the period.

The story of Appar, the great saint who converted Mahendravarman Pallava and who is always represented with a spud held by his hand against his shoulder, is graphically depicted in a number of scenes.

Then there is the story of Tirumūlar bathing with his wife in the tank beside the temple. This is followed by the story of a saint, who was fond of feeding Śaiva devotees and whom Śiva, in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa, once tested by demanding food at midnight, which he supplied. The label for this runs *Iḷaiyamāraṅgudi Mārar kadai.*

The next panel illustrates a loin-clad saint carrying a rod in his hand and standing before a scale, in which on one side there are two figures of a man and woman in adoration, and Śiva and Pārvatī on Nandi grant them *darśana.*

There is a scene of a king offering his sword to a young loin-clad Śaiva saint carrying a staff.

The devotion of Kaṇṇappanayanār is illustrated by representing him as plucking his eye with an arrow and offering it.

Mārkaṇḍeya appears next with the noose of Yama surrounding not only the neck of the adoring saint but also the *liṅga* itself.

Beyond it is the story of a woman with her hair being cut off, as a saint watches this and Śiva appears with his consort on his bull high up in the sky.

This is followed by the representation of the legend of a saint playing the flute in a forest surrounded by cows and close to an elephant when Śiva and Pārvatī on bull visit him.

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[1]See p. 34.

The next scene presents a devotee carefully preparing a garland and adoring with it Śiva seated in front of a temple with a rosary in his hand.

Then comes the legend of Nanda, the great saint, who bathed in the tank and entered the fire to have access into the portals of the Chidambaram temple and Śiva and Pārvatī on bull grant him *darśana.* This is labelled *Tirunāḷai-povār kadai.*

This is followed by the story of Tirukkuripputondar, the saintly washerman of Kāñchī, whose sincerity was tested by Śiva, who is here shown as an old Brāhmaṇa with a staff in his hand demanding his clothes that could not be washed by that evening owing to a storm.

Scenes from the life of Chaṇḍeśa are now shown. The boy-saint is bathing a *liṅga* under a tree with the milk of his cows: on his father angrily interrupting, Chaṇḍeśa, not brooking interference, cuts off his legs with an axe. For this he is rewarded by Śiva by winding a garland on his head. Chaṇḍeśa is shown reverently seated at the foot of seated Śiva and Pārvatī, while he is adorned with the garland. The inscription here reads *Śaynallūrpiḷḷaiyār kadai.*

Next is the story of the boy-saint Tirujñānasambanda, who overcame the Jainas, all shown impaled, by performing the miracle of floating a manuscript against the current of the stream. The saint is depicted as a very small boy with cymbals in his hand and as adored by a devotee from behind. Three nude Jainas, with flowers and other objects in their hands, are shown standing, probably to throw them into the stream and perform a miracle. The king is in the centre of the panel and beyond him are impaled the defeated Jainas.

Another carving shows a devotee, who, failing to secure ghee for lighting lamps as directed by an aerial voice from the Śiva temple at Tiruvālūr (indicated by a bull at the top) is shown filling a vessel with water from a lotus-pond full of fish and birds. The clear inscription here reads *Naminandi aḍigaḷ.*

Then there is the story of the boy-saint Sambanda, described as *Āḷuḍaiya-piḷḷaiyār* in the inscription. The father is questioning the boy, who points to Śiva and Pārvatī on Nandi and explains that he was fed by them with divine milk.

Beyond it is the legend of the warrior Kalikkāmānāyanār, dying on his bed rather than getting cured of paralysis by Sundaramūrti, who, in turn, attempts to commit suicide rather than return without curing him. Finally the one is brought to life and the other prevented from killing himself. The inscription here runs *eyarkon Kalikkāmāṇḍār.*

Two priests are now presented, *homa*-fire between them, with a label painted *Somāsimāranār.*

A saint adoring Śiva with a garland is shown next with the label *Śakkiyanār.* This is the story of a Jaina who took to Śiva worship and was so lost in it that he did not know even when he used bricks instead of flowers.

This is followed by the legend of a great Śaiva devotee, who offered his son's flesh to his guest who was no other than Śiva in disguise and demanded this ghastly food. When, however, it was cooked, the guest refused to take food in the house of the childless couple but finally appeared before them and restored to life the child, whom the mother received with joy. The label here is *Śiruttoṇḍar kadai.*

Next we have Śeramān, the Chera king, going to Kailāsa on an elephant. The label for it runs *Śeramānperumāḷ kadai.*

Beyond this is a scene showing a number of scholars and a king. The inscription is in two strips, *Poyyaḍimaiyillāda pulavar* and *Kuṛṛuvanār,* who were all Śaiva saints.

The next is a story which is described in the inscription as *Pugaḷchoḷanār.* Here the saintly Choḷa king is so filled with sorrow at the sight of a head of a devotee of Śiva in the midst of a number of heads piled in front of him by his victorious commander that, to expiate the sin, he took this enemy's head on his own and entered the fire when Śiva and Pārvati appeared on Nandi to bless him.

Beyond this is a scene from the life of a king who was fond of rewarding Śaiva saints whether they were sincere or not. He is shown in the company of six *paṇḍāram* saints. The label for this reads *Narasiṅgamuṇaiyaraiyar.*

The story narrated next is that of Ādipattan, a fisherman, who used to offer the best fish from his daily catch to Śiva at Nāga-

paṭṭiṇam. When one day he caught only one fish he willingly offered even that to the god, who immediately appeared before him with his consort on his bull and blessed him. The inscription reads *Adibattar-kadai.*

Then is the story of a devotee, who was in the habit of feeding Śaiva devotees and who cut off the hands of his wife since she hesitated to welcome and wash the feet of their old servant now turned a recluse, standing at their door as the guest. He is consequently graced by the *darśana* of Śiva and Pārvatī on bull. The inscription here reads *Kalikkambāṇḍār kaḍai.*

A saint is now shown as driving a pair of bulls for pressing oil, which is taken by him to the Śiva temple beyond the river. One day he failed to get the required oil, so that, to feed the lamps with his own blood, he tried to cut his head, but Śiva appeared and blessed him. The fragmentary inscription here is *Kaliyanār.*

The next story, as the inscription shows, is of Śattiyāṇḍār, a devotee of Śiva, who used to cut off the tongue of those who spoke ill of Śaiva devotees.

A Pallava king who abandoned royal glory for serving the god is now shown four times adoring temples at different places. The inscription here reads *Aiyyaḍigal Kāḍavarkonār.*

This is followed by a scene illustrating the story of the saint who regularly used to light lamps in temples, and once failing to obtain money by selling grass for purchasing ghee for the lamps, first lit the grass itself and later his own locks of hair. The devotee is Kaṇampulāṇḍār, as the inscription states.

The next carving is of the famous author of *Tirukkovai,* who spent all his wealth in renovating temples and finally reached mount Kailāsa. The inscription reads *Kārīyār.*

The next scene shows the conversion of the Pāṇḍyan king Neḍumāran through his queen and minister. The inscription here reads *Neḍumāranār.*

Beyond this is portrayed a sage seated with a rosary in his hand. The inscription names him Vāyilār.

Another scene shows a king cutting off the hands of his queen with a sword. It illustrates the story of a Pallava king who mutilated

his queen for having inadvertently smelt a flower intended for the deity. She had already had her nose cut off by a saint named Śeruttuṇai for the same offence. The inscription for this reads *Kalanchingaṇār.*

The incident of the queen's nose being cut by Śeruttuṇai is given in the adjacent panel. The inscription here reads *Śeruttuṇaiyāṇḍār.*

Beyond this is illustrated the story of the saintly priest of the temple at Śrīvilliputtūr, who steadfastly worshipped Śiva even in the days of a great famine. When he once dropped his water-pot on a *liṅga* on account of his extreme infirmity, the god appeared and directed him to seek and find a coin daily near the *bali-pīṭha,* so that he could sustain himself. The inscription here reads *Pugaḻttuṇaiyār.*

The next is a scene of a warrior killing a child with his sword, while some women shout in fear and crouch away from him. He then adores Śiva on Nandi with Pārvatī. It illustrates the story of the commander of a Choḷa king who killed all his men, including even babies, for having consumed paddy intended for Śiva during a famine when he was away in the battlefield. The inscription here reads *Koḻpuliyāṇḍār.*

The next scene is of saint adoring a number of other saints—an act which is as meritorious as adoring Śiva himself. The inscription reads *Battarāippaṇivār.*

The following scene shows, devotees singing and sounding cymbals in front of a Śiva temple. The label reads *Paramanaiye pāḍuvār,* meaning that their songs of praise are only for Śiva.

In the same train of thought is a scene showing a saint in contemplation, seated in the vicinity of a temple whence the deity is taken out in procession to the accompaniment of music and dance outside the temple near the *bali-pīṭha* and Nandi.

The next scene shows saints adoring Śiva at Tiruvārūr. The inscription reads *Tiruvārūrpirandār,* meaning that everyone born in the holy spot of Tiruvārūr is saintly enough to be adored.

Beyond this a saint is worshipping *liṅga;* there is a bell hanging from above and below there is a conch on a tripod, reminding

us of similar objects portrayed in Javanese sculpture. This, with its inscription *Mukkālam tirumeni tiṇḍuvār*, glorifies the greatness of those who worship Śiva thrice a day.

Another panel depicts the story of the Pāṇḍya king and his queen Maṅgayarkaraśi, who, with the help of the boy-saint Sambanda, converted her husband to Śaivism. The inscription reads *Pāṇḍimādevi*...

Then there is the story of the weaver-saint Neśāṇḍar, who always gave away the products of his loom to Śaiva devotees. This is indicated by the respective inscription.

A beautiful sculpture beyond this shows a king adoring a temple: this is a portrait of one of the Choḷa monarchs who was ranked among the saints for his devotion. The inscription reads *Ko Śiṅgapperumāḷ*.

The scene that comes next illustrates the story of a devotee and his wife who played musical instruments and sang near the temple of Śiva at Madurai. In the hand of the saint is an early type of *vīṇā* (interesting for the study of ancient musical instruments), and his wife plays on cymbals. The inscription reads *Tirunīlakaṇṭapperumbāṇanār*.

Beyond this can be recognized with the help of the inscriptions Śaḍaiyanār and Iśaiñāniyār, the father and mother of Sundara, whose story is illustrated in the succeeding panels.

An old Brāhmaṇa with a manuscript and umbrella in his hand talking to a princely youth, with the inscription reading *Āvana-olaikāṭṭinapaḍi*, illustrates the incident of Śiva coming disguised as a Brāhmaṇa to fetch Sundara-mūrti on the day of his marriage to his temple at Tiruveṇṇainallūr by presenting a document in proof of his claim over Sundara's person as also earlier over those of his father and grandfather.

The scene that follows shows some Śaiva saints and a youth sounding cymbals in front of a temple. This illustrates the beginning of Sundara's career as a composer of hymns. The inscription reads *Uḍaiyanambiyai āṇḍukoṇḍaruḷiyapaḍi*.

After this a princely youth, evidently Sundara, is shown leading a king beside a temple and directing him to cross a river

to reach another temple of Śiva beyond it. The inscription here reads *Uḍaiyanambikku ollenraruḷinapaḍi.*

The next scene shows Sundara, almost princely in appearance with peacock-feather umbrella carried by one of his attendants, waylaid by dacoits and robbed of the wealth he got from the Chera king. The inscription here runs *Uḍayanambiyai veḍar vaḻipparittaviḍam.*

Further up is a scene showing Sundara sounding cymbals in the vicinity of a temple where a number of bags are piled before him. This illustrates how the thieves restored the wealth robbed from Sundara at the command of the god at Tirumuruganpūṇḍi. The inscription reads *Tirumuruganpūṇḍiyil peṛṛapaḍi.*

Beyond this is the last scene which shows a woman receiving her child from the jaws of a crocodile in a tank adjoining a temple. The princely figure here is saint Sundara with his hands in adoration. The scene illustrates the story of how, by singing a hymn, Sundara caused a crocodile to disgorge the child it had swallowed near the temple at Avināśi. The inscription reads *Avināsiyāṇḍār mudalaivāipiḷḷai.*

GLOSSARY

ābhaṅga, slight flexion (in the standing pose of a figure).

ālīḍha, the pose of a warrior with his right leg bent forward.

ardha-maṇḍapa, 'half hall', the smaller hall connecting the shrine and the larger pillared hall (*maṇḍapa*).

bali-pīṭha, altar for the placing of offerings.

bhujaṅga-trāsita, 'scared by snake', a dance-pose suggesting movement away from a snake out of fear.

bodhika, a corbel surmounting the capital of a pillar like the *pushpa-bodhika*, 'corbel of flower-pattern'.

chatura, a dance-pose, with the left foot slightly raised but still touching the ground.

gaṇa, a dwarf follower of Śiva.

gopura, the imposing temple-gateway.

kañchuki, 'shirt-wearer', a chamberlain in the royal harem.

koshṭha, a cell or niche.

koshṭha-pañjara, a niche decorated with curved cage-motif (cf. *kumbha-pañjara*).

kūḍu, the arched-window motif on roof-line with shovel- or lion-head top.

kumbha-pañjara, a vase with foliage crowned by curved cage-like pattern, a motif alternating with *koshṭha-pañjara* niches.

mahārājalīlā, a royal pose of sitting at ease.

makara, the motif of a crocodile with floriated tail.

maṇḍapa, the pillared and canopied hall.

mukha-maṇḍapa, the narrow hall connecting the *ardha-maṇḍapa* or the *maṇḍapa* with the shrine.

nāga-bandha, a pillar-decoration simulating the hood of a snake.

padmāsana, a seated pose of ease with the legs crossed and soles turned up.

pañjara, 'nest', a cage-like decorative motif for a niche or base.

paryaṅka-bandha, legs bound in a strap for being easily kept in a *yogic* pose of meditation (cf. *yoga-paṭṭa*).

śālā, a hut-shaped barrel-roofed pavilion.

tri-bhaṅga, triflex (in the standing pose of a figure).

vimāna, the elevation of the shrine with the superstructure.

yāḷi, leograph.

yoga-paṭṭa, a band-strip for binding the legs in a pose of meditation (cf. *paryaṅka-bandha*).

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